

REMINISCENCES FROM THE LIFE OF ATHANASIOS KARLIN:

THE TRIP TO AMERICA

The traveling

"The "Contor" a kind of boat was in the middle of the Wolga river where our luggage was being brought by means of little boats (laotgas) and this way reached the people to the big boat. It was a rough and foggy morning this October 10, on which we bid farewell to Katherinenstadt. The Captain (Samalot) of the steamer waited fully two hours till all our luggage and we ourselves were on board. 11 O'clock and the steamer started to move ahead towards Saratow. Several friends and relatives accompanied us to Saratow, so my brother Johann, brother-in-law Karl Koerner, Schoolmaster Jakob Schmitt, Andreas Schmitt, Dorothea, grandfather and several other ones, all good singers. When the ship started to sail, they were singing the psalm: God is our refuge and strength, a helper in great needs which have befallen us etc.

Our travel company for America consisted of us and 8 persons, Michael Mayer, Justus Bissing together with wife and their sons: Alois, Justus, Jakob, Alexander and Peter. Furthermore Friedrich Koerner with wife and sons: Friedrich, Paul, Phillip, Alois, Peter (John had been drafted) and daughters Emilie and Anna.

We disembarked at 3 P.M. and went to Ludwig Korner's restaurant, and there we met the emigrants from Herzog who also want to go to America: Michael Storm, Anton and Nikolaus Dreiling and several others, a number of people from Liebenthal, about 40 families in all and their leader, Nickolaus Schamme. They wanted us to stay another day and go with them together by train. But we didn't do that as the troupe would have been too big. So we stayed only to the morning of October 11, got our tickets from Saratov over Tambow, Koslow, Srjasi, Orel, Smolensk, Witebsk to Wersbowlow, the border-town of Russia. Here, the passports were examined and tickets bought for over the border to Eydkunen, the German border-town, a quarter mile from the Russian border. Here is to add, that when we were finished with our tickets at

Saratow, some other emigrants joined us, Kamanka and Pfeifer from the mountain-site, Jakob Lang and wife, Michael Meder with wife, Michael Mayer (the Gevater Michael), Joseph Schaefer with wife, M. Urban Christoph Stegman, Hofsetz and Georg Vogel were unmarried. Those all would have been drafted by fall."

The journey goes on.

"It was October 11, 1875 according to Russian time, according to American October 23 when we took final leave from our friends at the station of Saratow. A scene I witnessed at that time is unforgettable to me, because it was too funny. I guess it was the old Stephan Urban of Pfeifer. He fell around the neck of his brother Mattias weeping and crying out: brother, sacr...You all will be lost, the devil will get you all, I won't be seeing you anymore. When this was over, we boarded the train and it headed west into an unknown future. We were having a nice ride without any stops till Orel. Here we got out for a rest since Russian railway wagons are no American Pullman car or coach. They are small with narrow wooden benches, sometimes overcrowded and by no means pleasant. We did some shopping in Orel, bought some bread and some meat and other things. We got again in the train and on it went till we arrived at Berlin and that was on October 15, American calendar, Oct. 27, because Russia is 12 days behind the time. We thought the Russians to be rough people who treated us roughly, it was nothing compared with the Germans in Berlin. They are surely the roughest we ever met. We stayed two days in Berlin in order to get the necessary information about the boat lines for our crossing of the ocean. We were advised to go via Bremen to Baltimore. Our Russian money we got exchanged into American currency, getting for a Russian Rubel 70 cents. After having all our money exchanged we headed towards the sea. We arrived at the station of the city of Bremen on Thursday, October 31. Here we met again our emigrants from Herzog.

Once more, we all received the Sacraments, because it was All Saints Day, November 1. On the 2nd, the All Souls Day we went not more than two weeks, as

we are told. Our steamer was no big boat and named "Ohio". She belonged to the North German Lloyd. Our tickets called for Zwischendeck on the lower deck of the ship and it cost per person 22 dollars for the whole passage. For two days, from Bremen to England everything went on very well and better than on the train across the country. At the English port goods were embarked and then the steamer set out on the high sea, the Ocean. Fritz Huseman, our innkeeper in Bremen had arranged for us Catharinenstadter and Bergseiter boys who were with us, a room in the middle of the steamer. He said there will be not so much rocking. And he was right. As soon as the first day of our departure from the English coast, it started, - the sea-sickness. The first ones who had their rooms closer to the ship's end, were the first ones who had to feed the fish. But our turn came too, I especially, and since I felt so nauseated I could hardly eat, even when it was over. The others however could enjoy their meals afterward. But the more they enjoyed it, the less they got to eat, the rations became smaller and smaller. We were already 2 weeks on sea and the boat battling with storms and waves could not get ahead. One day it was on the 16th of October our boat made only three miles headway, no one was allowed on deck because the waves went over the boat; 17-18 days passed and no sign of land, the rations became smaller and smaller. The passengers protested and went to the Captain scolding on account of the little food and of having said to us we will be on land in two weeks and by now 18 days have gone by and no land yet. The Captain, a very understanding man said "Good people, you see yourself how the weather is, if I am too hard on the ship by going faster, something might break on the machines and none of us will reach the shore. I am responsible for your lives. And I like to live too." In the night of the 18th during the storm, my brother Jakob's wife gave birth to a baby. It was hard on the mother and she suffered some harm for the rest of her life; never been a well woman.

"At last, in the afternoon of November 22, we heard the calls, land; land;

we see land. And in the morning of November 23, 1875 came the pilot and took over the steering of our boat leading her into the pier of Baltimore."

America

"As soon as we arrived, our bags and packages were examined by the customs officers, if there was anything to declare. In the meantime, Nickolaus Schamme, the leader of the Herzoger Emigrants had met C.B. Schmitt, a land-agent of Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and he agreed with his people, the Herzoger, to go to Topeka, Kansas and from there to look over their country. We joined this group. But later we found that we shouldn't have done so, because on our route (over St. Louis) at every stop, someone else of every family ran off the train in order to buy bread, but could never get enough. No baker anywhere had enough bread in store for 500 hungry people. Only the first ones who came to the bakery-shop would get some bread, and the rest went away sadly without anything.

"We arrived at Topeka on the 26th and for three days we all lived together in an old vacated hotel. It was a stone building, however too small for 500 persons; the toilets got in these three days so filled up, that it was terrible to go in. The Santa Fe shops are build now on this place. So we rented a house for ourselves in North Topeka on the eastside of the big bridge, near the river. It was a two story frame house, consisting of 4 rooms and a kitchen which was used together with the Bissing family, who had a room below us and also the Koerner family, our family and Gevater. (probably brother in law) Michael Mayer and wife were living at the second floor in two rooms. Michael Mayer and his wife Marie, remained with us till July 1876 and helped us with the work. As Jakob's was sick and couldn't nurse her baby (born on the boat) we had to keep Gevater Mari with us to nurse it. Here we made acquaintance with the American doctors and their prices, they were Dr. Friedrich Klenz and Dr. Adolph Cornier, both Germans. Dr. Cornier didn't have his practice anymore, he visited us just as friend and adviser. We were five workers: Peter and Jakob, the two Michael Mayers and I, we went out to look for work and

found some too, at the farms, husking corn. We didn't make much, because we did not understand how to husk properly. 25 cents, that was all we could earn a day. We got 3 cents for a husked bushel. We had to take from home our food for the day. The farm was 3 miles outside the city. From Christmas on I took another job Farmer Federling hired me. He was a German, but his wife and children couldn't speak a word of German. I made ten dollars a month. My work was to feed the 50 heads of cattle, of course to get the fodder in first. I was bad off when the boss was away and I had speak to her, who understood only English. I was always glad when dinner was over and I could go away from the table, back to my work.

"In the meantime my father went around with the land-agent C.B. Schmitt and so did Anton Dreiling, Peter Quint, Franz Weber and others started out to look for tracts of land. They got their railroad rides free. At first, they went by the Santa Fe train west to Great Bend and Larned, but they found the grounds too expensive, five dollars per acre. That much we couldn't pay, and besides, there was not enough land and we did not like that part of the country, not suitable for larger settlements, villages, later on schools and churches. Upon their return to Topeka, they met A. Roedelheimer, a land-agent for the Union Pacific. He said, his company had much and good land to sell and cheap too. They should take a trip with him. So, this time went Justus Bissing and some other Herzoger. They came till Hays, looked over the country site between Hays and Ellis on Hogback, now, Yosemento (Hogback or Yosemento - a small hill near Hays and Ellis) and here Mr. Bissing picked out lots for us as Heimstadten. When they came back, my father, Dreiling and Weber went to Hays, too, to see it themselves, but they found the place not big enough either for the erection of two villages like Herzog and Catharienstadt should be some day, after all the other friends who still were in Russia, had come over. They could not obtain land around there. Discouraged they returned to Hays and told Mr. Roedelheimer. He said he has some more land northeast of Hays, perhaps we would like that. There will be enough Heimstadteland and we shall let you have

the railroad site at two dollars the acre with 11 years term for payment and at seven % interest. Moreover, the railroad company will be willing to transport all your goods from Topeka or Kansas City and whatever you buy during one year, free of charge. And this the company did actually. And so they made the trip to Northfork, where there is now Catherinenstadt and Herzog. We looked the land over and liked it and the whole scenery, especially for that price. Hence we decided, when the majority of the other ones will agree with us, we shall settle there.